

**OPINIONS AND DECLARATIONS  
RENDERED BY THE INTER-  
NATIONAL COMMISSION ON  
ZOOLOGICAL NOMENCLATURE**

*Edited by*

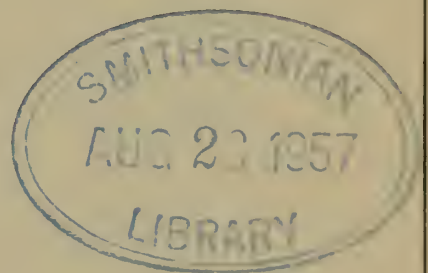
**FRANCIS HEMMING, C.M.G., C.B.E.**

Secretary to the Commission

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**OPINION 465**

Validation under the Plenary Powers of the specific name *silvestris* Schreber, [1777], as published in the combination *Felis (catus) silvestris*, for the European Wild Cat (Class Mammalia)



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# INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON ZOOLOGICAL NOMENCLATURE

## COMPOSITION AT THE TIME OF THE ADOPTION OF THE RULING GIVEN IN OPINION 465

### A. The Officers of the Commission

*Honorary Life President*: Dr. Karl JORDAN (*British Museum (Natural History), Zoological Museum, Tring, Herts., England*)

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(12th August 1953)

*Vice-President*: Senhor Dr. Afranio do AMARAL (*Sao Paulo, Brazil*) (12th August 1953)

*Secretary*: Mr. Francis HEMMING (*London, England*) (27th July 1948)

### B. The Members of the Commission

(Arranged in order of precedence by reference to date of election or of most recent re-election,  
as prescribed by the International Congress of Zoology)

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(12th August 1953)

Dr. K. H. L. KEY (*Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, Canberra, A.C.T., Australia*) (15th October 1954)

Dr. Alden H. MILLER (*Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California, U.S.A.*)  
(29th October 1954)

Doc. Dr. Ferdinand PRANTL (*Národní Museum V Praze, Prague, Czechoslovakia*) (30th  
October 1954)

Professor Dr. Wilhelm KÜHNELT (*Zoologisches Institut der Universität, Vienna, Austria*)  
(6th November 1954)

Professor F. S. BODENHEIMER (*The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel*) (11th November  
1954)

Professor Ernst MAYR (*Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard College, Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S.A.*) (4th December 1954)

Professor Enrico TORTONESE (*Museo di Storia Naturale "G. Doria", Genova, Italy*)  
(16th December 1954)

## OPINION 465

VALIDATION UNDER THE PLENARY POWERS OF THE  
SPECIFIC NAME "SILVESTRIS" SCHREBER, [1777],  
AS PUBLISHED IN THE COMBINATION "FELIS  
(CATUS) SILVESTRIS", FOR THE EUROPEAN  
WILD CAT (CLASS MAMMALIA)

**RULING** :—(1) Under the Plenary Powers the under-mentioned specific name is hereby suppressed for the purposes of the Law of Priority but not for those of the Law of Homonymy :—*ferus* Schreber, [1775], as published in the combination *Felis catus* Linn. *ferus*.

(2) The under-mentioned specific name is hereby placed on the *Official List of Specific Names in Zoology* with the Name No. 1158 :—

*silvestris* Schreber, [1777], as published in the combination *Felis (catus) silvestris*

(3) The under-mentioned specific names are hereby placed on the *Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Names in Zoology* with the Name Numbers severally specified below :—

(a) *ferus* Schreber, [1775], as published in the combination *Felis catus* Linn. *ferus*, as suppressed under the Plenary Powers in (1) above (Name No. 385) ;

- (b) *ferus* Erxleben, 1777, as published in the combination *Felis catus* var. *ferus* (a junior homonym of *ferus* Schreber, [1775], as published in the combination *Felis catus* Linn. *ferus*) (Name No. 386).

## I. THE STATEMENT OF THE CASE

On 4th March 1953, Dr. T. C. S. Morrison-Scott (then of the *British Museum (Natural History), London* and now *Director, The Science Museum, London*) addressed a preliminary communication to the Office of the Commission on the subject of the possible validation under the Commission's Plenary Powers of the specific name *silvestris* Schreber, [1777], as published in the combination *Felis (catus) silvestris*, as the name for the European Wild Cat. This led to the submission by Dr. Morrison-Scott of the following application on 23rd February 1955 :—

**Proposed use of the Plenary Powers to validate the specific name  
“ silvestris ” Schreber, [1777], as published in the combination  
“ Felis (catus) silvestris ”, for the European Wild Cat**

By T. C. S. MORRISON-SCOTT, D.S.C., M.A., D.Sc.

(*British Museum (Natural History), London*)

The purpose of the present application is to ask the International Commission to use its Plenary Powers to validate the specific name *silvestris* Schreber, [1777], as published in the combination *Felis (catus) silvestris*, the name universally applied to the European Wild Cat. The facts of this case are set out below.

2. The name *Felis silvestris* was first published after the starting point of zoological nomenclature by Brisson who in 1762 (*Regn. Anim.*

(ed. 2) : 192) applied it to the European Wild Cat. Brisson, however, used many polyverbal designations for species and certainly cannot be claimed to have applied the principles of binominal nomenclature. Although a number of important generic names are currently accepted as from Brisson, none of his specific names are accepted as available.

3. The next author to use the specific name *silvestris* for the European Wild Cat was Schreber (*Die Säugthiere* 3 : 397) who under the heading “Die Wilde Katze” wrote :—

*Felis (catus) silvestris* ; *Felis pilis ex fusco flavicante & albido variegatis, cauda annulis alternatim nigris & ex sordide albo flavicantibus.* BRISS. quadr. p. 192.

4. The portion of Schreber’s book containing the foregoing description was published in 1777. Unfortunately the plate (pl. 107A) on which Schreber figured the “Die wilde Katze” was published in 1775 and on this plate Schreber gave the legend “*Felis Catus* Linn. *ferus*”. Thus, the specific name *ferus* Schreber has two years’ priority over the name *silvestris* Schreber, which, as already explained, is the name always used for this well-known species. The name *ferus* Schreber appears to have been completely overlooked and has never been used. It would be absurd to upset the name which has been accepted for this species for nearly one hundred and eighty years, having regard to the many hundreds of times that this name has appeared not only in specialist literature but also in general zoological works, both scientific and popular. Such action would be all the more absurd in the present case in view of the fact that the earlier name appeared on a plate in the same work as the name now universally used.

5. I accordingly ask the International Commission :—

(1) to use its Plenary Powers to suppress the specific name *ferus* Schreber, [1775], as published in the combination *Felis catus* Linn. *ferus*, for the purposes of the Law of Priority but not for those of the Law of Homonymy ;

(2) to place the under-mentioned specific name on the *Official List of Specific Names in Zoology* :—*silvestris* Schreber, [1777], as published in the combination *Felis (catus) silvestris* ;

(3) to place the under-mentioned specific names on the *Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Names in Zoology* :—

(a) *ferus* Schreber, [1775], as published in the combination *Felis catus* Linn. *ferus*, as suppressed under the Plenary Powers under (1) above ;

- (b) *ferus* Erxleben, 1777 (*Syst. Regn. Anim.* 1 : 518), as published in the combination *Felis catus* var. *ferus* (a junior homonym of *Felis catus* Linn. *ferus* Schreber, [1775]).

## II. THE SUBSEQUENT HISTORY OF THE CASE

**2. Registration of the present application :** Upon the receipt of Dr. Morrison-Scott's preliminary communication in March 1953 the question of the validation of the name *silvestris* Schreber, [1777], as published in the combination *Felis (catus) silvestris*, as the name for the European Wild Cat was allotted the Registered No. Z.N.(S.) 910.

**3. Publication of the present application :** The present application was sent to the printer on 11th March 1955 and was published on 31st May in the same year in Part 6 of Volume 11 of the *Bulletin of Zoological Nomenclature* (Morrison-Scott, 1955, *Bull. zool. Nomencl.* 11 : 189—190).

**4. Issue of Public Notices :** Under the revised procedure prescribed by the Thirteenth International Congress of Zoology, Paris, 1948 (1950, *Bull. zool. Nomencl.* 4 : 51—56), Public Notice of the possible use by the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature of its Plenary Powers was given on 31st May 1955 (a) in Part 6 of Volume 11 of the *Bulletin of Zoological Nomenclature* (the Part containing Dr. Morrison-Scott's application) and (b) to the other prescribed serial publications. In addition such Notice was given also to four general zoological serial publications and to two specialist serials in Europe and America.

**5. Support for the validation of the specific name “*silvestris*” Schreber, [1777], as the name for the European Wild Cat :** On 26th September 1955, Dr. P. Hershkovitz (*Chicago Natural History Museum, Chicago, U.S.A.*) addressed a letter to the Office of the Commission with which he transmitted the following statement in which, while commenting adversely on some of the less important features of the present application, he indicated his support for the validation under the Plenary Powers of the specific name *silvestris* Schreber, [1777], as the name for the European Wild Cat :—

The combination *Felis silvestris* credited to Schreber, 1777, is evidently antedated by Schreber's own *Felis catus* Linn. *ferus*, 1775. Erxleben also used the combination *Felis catus ferus* in 1777, citing Schreber's 1775 work among his references. However, the name *ferus* has been virtually ignored. No confusion would result from its suppression as of Schreber, 1775. There is no need to suppress it from Erxleben, 1777.

It is important to note in this connection that it has been suggested that *Felis silvestris* and *Felis catus* are conspecific. Once this concept is generally accepted, *silvestris* would be preserved only as a sub-specific name for Central European wildcats.

**6. No objection received :** No objection to the action proposed in the present case was received from any source.

### III. THE DECISION TAKEN BY THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON ZOOLOGICAL NOMENCLATURE

**7. Issue of Voting Paper V.P.(56)13 :** On 29th February 1956 a Voting Paper (V.P.(56)13) was issued in which the Members of the Commission were invited to vote either for, or against,

“ the proposal relating to the name to be used for the European Wild Cat as set out in Points (1) to (3) in paragraph 5 on page 190 of Volume 11 of the *Bulletin of Zoological Nomenclature* ” [i.e. in the paragraph numbered as above in the paper reproduced in the first paragraph of the present *Opinion*].

**8. The Prescribed Voting Period :** As the foregoing Voting Paper was issued under the Three-Month Rule, the Prescribed Voting Period closed on 29th May 1956.

**9. Particulars of the Voting on Voting Paper V.P.(56)13 :** At the close of the Prescribed Voting Period, the state of the voting on Voting Paper V.P.(56)13 was as follows :—

(a) *Affirmative Votes had been given by the following twenty-five (25) Commissioners (arranged in the order in which Votes were received) :*

Holthuis ; Hering ; Lemche ; do Amaral ; Bradley (J.C.) ; Vokes ; Mayr ; Dymond ; Bodenheimer ; Mertens ; Sylvester-Bradley ; Jaczewski ; Esaki ; Boschma ; Key ; Hankó ; Riley ; Prantl ; Stoll ; Hemming ; Cabrera ; Tortonese ; Bonnet ; Kühnelt ; Miller ;

(b) *Negative Votes :*

None ;

(c) *Voting Papers not returned :*

None.



**10. Declaration of Result of Vote :** On 30th May 1956, Mr. Hemming, Secretary to the International Commission, acting as Returning Officer for the Vote taken on Voting Paper V.P.(56)13, signed a Certificate that the Votes cast were as set out in paragraph 9 above and declaring that the proposal submitted in the foregoing Voting Paper had been duly adopted and that the decision so taken was the decision of the International Commission in the matter aforesaid.

**11. Preparation of the Ruling given in the present “ Opinion ” :** On 7th January 1957, Mr. Hemming prepared the Ruling given in the present *Opinion* and at the same time signed a Certificate that the terms of that Ruling were in complete accord with those of the proposal approved by the International Commission in its Vote on Voting Paper V.P.(56)13.

**12. Original References :** The following are the original references for the names placed on *Official Lists* and *Official Indexes* by the Ruling given in the present *Opinion* :—

*ferus, Felis catus* Linn., Schreber, [1775], *Die Säugthiere* 3 : pl. 107A

*ferus, Felis catus* var., Erxleben, 1777, *Syst. Regn. Anim.* 1 : 518

*silvestris, Felis (catus)*, Schreber, [1777] *Die Säugthiere* 3 : 397

**13.** The prescribed procedures were duly complied with by the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature in dealing with the present case, and the present *Opinion* is accordingly hereby rendered in the name of the said International Commission by the under-signed Francis Hemming, Secretary to the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature, in virtue of all and every the powers conferred upon him in that behalf.

14. The present *Opinion* shall be known as *Opinion Four Hundred and Sixty-Five* (465) of the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature.

DONE in London, this Seventh day of January, Nineteen Hundred and Fifty-Seven.

*Secretary to the International Commission  
on Zoological Nomenclature*

**FRANCIS HEMMING**